

Acoustic Solid Wood MPX turntable

by Jimmy Hughes

Located in Altsdorf, a small town not far from Nuremberg, *Acoustic Solid* is a German engineering company hand-crafting high-end turntables. It offers two lines – ‘Classic’ and ‘Aluminium’. The MPX is one of the Classic series, and sits about midway in their range of 13 models.

It's a large heavy beast, weighing around 35kg. Unlike the Solid Wood version, which uses MDF and is fully veneered,

the Solid Wood MPX features a plywood base/plinth. The front sides and back are left *au-naturel* so you can see the individual ply layers. Love it!

The quality of finish on the plinth is outstanding – it's uber-classy and feels sensuously-smooth to the touch. Speaking personally, I find the MPX *gorgeous* to behold. It's big and bold, yet doesn't shriek at you, being understated and quietly-impressive. As a piece of design it oozes style and elegance. ▶



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▶ The turntable itself is mechanically simple and functional. As a result, it's robust and very easy to set up. Straight from the box, you could probably have it up and running in an hour or so. Once working, there's very little that might need tweaking or fine-tuning – either now or in the future.

The MPX comes fitted with a WTB 370 (Rega) tonearm and an Ortofon Quintet Red moving coil cartridge. Given the relatively-modest cost of these items (in hi-end hi-fi terms they're dirt-cheap), both performed exceedingly well.

The cartridge tracks at a fairly high *downforce* of between 2.1 to 2.5g. For me that's a good thing as it aids stability, and enables the stylus to 'clean' the grooves by dislodging bits of debris that cause ticks and pops. You may therefore find certain LPs sound 'quieter' after a few plays...

The motor is housed in a free-standing enclosure, separate from the plinth. Because of this, you can alter the belt tension by moving the motor closer or further from the deck. The belt is interesting. It's one-piece (not spliced) and very thin, with a textured grippy surface.

Some heavy-platter turntables employ a smooth belt to deliberately introduce some slip. Effectively, the motor just supplies enough torque to keep the platter running up to speed. But with the MPX, the motor definitely 'drives' the platter. You can tell by the relatively fast start-up speed – about 4.5 revs from stationary. 33 and 45 speeds are offered, with fine adjustment possible. This is important as variations in belt tension (caused by motor placement) will alter the running speed slightly. The motor has a small switch-mode power supply, and a separate control box with buttons to select 33/45 speed, and fine speed adjustment. This perfectly maintains the MPX's Spartan simple pared-back design, and eliminates electronics from the plinth.

The main centre bearing is described as a 'zero tolerance' type, and has no perceptible free-play. The shaft is about 5.5cm long and 1cm dia, with a PTFE ball in the centre. With the belt removed, it takes approximately 1m20s for the platter to stop turning when revolving at 33rpm.

The deck is supplied with a 30cm diameter 0.5cm thick acrylic support layer, plus a thin leather mat. You've the option of using the mat underneath, or on top of, the acrylic layer, or just using the layer or the mat on its own. Some adjustment of arm height would be required without the layer.

I tried all the various options, and they certainly did change the sound. But I found it difficult to come down on one definitely being superior to the others. Eventually, I settled for the support layer minus the leather mat, but with a John Rogers Ringmat used instead.

First impressions were of a big solid stable presentation. The MPX sounds rock-steady and unflappable, with outstanding pitch stability – something to be expected, given its massive 12kg platter. It delivers deep powerful bass lines, creating an impression of weight and authority.

I really noticed this on music with strong synthesiser lines. You experience a hefty inexorable sense of power and mass as the air moves. Yet, while the bottom end is full-bodied and deep, it's not bloated or ponderous; just satisfyingly-rich – a nice ample weighty sort of sound...

Stereo placement of images in the soundstage was very secure. There's decently-wide separation between the channels, and a secure sense of placement. This ensures all the various musical lines remain individual and separate, without seeming disjointed.

The result was engaging and musically-rewarding to listen to. Plenty of subtle information beguiled the ear, presented in a manner that sounded smooth and effortlessly-natural. While listening, you could easily 'forget' an LP was playing – the sound being more akin to a master-tape...

I was quite impressed by Ortofon's Quintet Red moving coil cartridge. Given its low price, it sounds clear and detailed. Agreed, the last iota of delicate refinement and subtlety seems to be absent. The upper registers aren't quite as clean and transparent as some more expensive pickups.

For the most part, we're not talking about drastic differences here. On many LPs, the Ortofon did a grand job. But on others you could sometimes detect a slight coarseness in the upper registers. I tried a number of things to reduce this, but could never eliminate it completely.

So, the cartridge is a slight 'weak' point. Those anxious to get the best from this turntable and arm should consider upgrading it at some point. But to keep things in perspective; those coming to an MPX bundle from something more-modest will probably be bowled over by what they hear.

The WTB 370 arm is really excellent. All the little changes over a standard Rega arm make it slightly nicer to use. And ▶

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▶ while the differences are subtle, they all add-up and are very worthwhile. The arm can be adjusted for height, which is good.

The tolerances on the main centre-bearing are extremely fine, and there is virtually no perceptible rumble to speak of. With the stylus in contact with the plinth, you can just (and I mean, just) detect a very faint low frequency ‘grumbling’ noise when spinning the platter by hand.

You have to set the volume about 30dB above normal listening levels to hear anything, which means noise from footfall transmission is likely to be significantly greater than anything produced by the bearing. Being physically separate, the motor ought to produce virtually no transmitted vibration.

However, place the stylus so it’s in contact with the plinth, start the motor so the platter spins, and a tiny amount of vibration can just be detected though the speakers with volume levels set really high. At normal volume levels this noise is totally inaudible – it’s only there if you really search...

The density of the surface the turntable sits-on will affect the transmission of motor vibration. So try different supports if this is of interest. And do please understand – I only mentioned this vanishingly slight motor noise on the pretext of finding something (anything!) to complain about!

As a final throw of the dice, I tried the MPX with a different cartridge – Transfiguration’s Temper W. The sound improved considerably. This cartridge really allowed you to hear just how good the MPX turntable is. And so it should, given how much extra the Temper W costs over the Ortofon. It’s one of the great sadnesses of the final years of the 2010s that Seiji Yoshioka of Immutable Music passed away in early 2018, and the delightful Transfiguration brand effectively died with him. The Temper – second only to the Orpheus in outright performance – remains a cartridge without equal.

I also found LP surface noise was subjectively lower with the Temper W – fewer/quieter clicks and pops, and a lowering of the general noise floor. The Ortofon seemed to make surface swishes and crackly backgrounds a tad more

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Platter: 12kg weight 60 mm thick aluminium machined from a solid billet

Mat: Natural leather with a 5mm thick acrylic layer support disc

Tonearm: WTB 370 with Ortofon Quintet Red moving coil pickup cartridge

Control: Microprocessor controlled power supply

Drive: String-drive by a separately housed synchronous motor

Chassis: 80 mm strong real wood veneers multiplex plywood panel

Dimensions: 470 × 370 mm; 250 mm

Weight: Approx 35 kg

Price: £3,495

Manufacturer: Acoustic Solid

URL: acoustic-solid.com

UK importer/distributor: Elite Audio Ltd

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evident. The Temper sounded smoother and cleaner, and that cartridge deserves and demands a good turntable.

In every respect, the Acoustic Solid MPX proved to be a superb turntable that performed in an exemplary fashion. With solid build quality and excellent finish, you get outstanding performance at a pleasingly attractive price. It also looks great and should last a lifetime...

Although the MPX is not Acoustic Solid’s top turntable, it has all the features and attributes of the company’s flagship Referenz model – just a bit less heft. So, I wouldn’t expect there to be a huge difference in sound quality – maybe just a bit less authority? But I could be wrong...

Certainly, I really enjoyed using and listening to the MPX, and liked it immensely. It never left me wanting more, and always produced convincing results regardless of the music playing. You should definitely audition an Acoustic Solid MPX if in the market for a good high-end turntable. +